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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA CONCERNED FOR ITS TROOPS IN WAKE OF  
KILLING OF RWANDANS IN DARFUR

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Prime Minister Meles told Ambassador July 11 that, in the wake of the killing of five Rwandan troops in Darfur, he was concerned for the safety of Ethiopia's 1500 troops now being deployed to Darfur. Meles asked the United States for assistance in pressing the United Nations and others for Ethiopia to be able to bring heavy equipment to ensure the force protection/self-defense of Ethiopian troops serving in Darfur. The killing of the Rwandan troops underscored for Meles the need for more equipment, including tanks and artillery, as a means of ensuring the Ethiopian contingent's self-defense.

¶2. (C) Meles added that Ethiopia's other concerns included the inability of Ethiopian troops to be commanded by the country's own battle hardened commanders. He expressed anxiety that the non-Ethiopian force commanders lack combat experience, and that through inexperience and caution non-Ethiopian force commanders may place Ethiopian troops in greater danger and cause higher and unnecessary casualty rates in any operation. He also underscored his desire to see more Ethiopian troops deployed as a measure of protection and power projection.

¶3. (C) Meles said he was committed to the Darfur operation because, as a neighboring state, the stability of Sudan was of strategic interest to Ethiopia.

¶4. (C) Comment: Prime Minister Meles and his government has provided useful information on Sudanese political issues and has been a strong supporter of the United States and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as the basis for peace in the north-south dialogue in Sudan. Ethiopia has faced recent border problems with Sudan over disputed border markings but Meles has committed to finding a peaceful diplomatic effort to ease border tensions and resolve disputes. On Ethiopia's troop deployment to Darfur, Meles has stated repeatedly that he is committed to this operation not only as one of Africa's largest troop contributing country to peacekeeping operations, but also because of Ethiopia's desire to play a constructive role in promoting a peaceful resolution of problems in Sudan. Meles has repeatedly stated his desire that there not be another problem neighbor to add to the instability in Somalia and the rogue state of Eritrea. End Comment.  
YAMAMOTO